



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.53

**Subject: Post Secondary Education – Bright Futures Program
Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)**

Supersedes: DCS 16.53, 11/01/02

Local Policy: No

Local Procedures: No

Training Required: No

Applicable Practice Model Standard(s): No

Approved by:

Effective date: 11/01/02

Revision date: ¹01/01/05

Application

To All Department of Children's Services Employees

Authority: TCA 37-5-106; Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

Policy

In order to assist young adults to meet their post secondary educational goals, DCS will provide limited monetary assistance through Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETVs) for tuition, campus room and board, books and supplies to both young adults in custody and those receiving voluntary post custody services as they pursue post secondary education. These financial aid supports will complement state, federal, and privately endowed scholarship programs.

Procedures

A. Post secondary education services

1. The purpose of this service and payments is to motivate and enable young adults to attain economic independence and social maturity while at the same time completing their education.
2. Regional Independent Living (IL) specialists will be contacted to meet with a young adult who is considering a

¹ For the period of 07/1/04 to 12/31/04, youth receiving services under existing policy will be grand fathered in under revised policy effective 01/01/05.

post secondary education in order to discuss post secondary opportunities in the region and to ensure that the young adult has applied for applicable financial aid.

3. The IL program staff shall meet with the school guidance counselor to obtain information about specific post secondary educational institutions and information about applying for financial assistance and make that information available to the youth.
4. Case managers and IL specialists shall ensure that young adults request catalogues from schools that they might be interested in and narrow the choices by visiting the post secondary program. Additionally, the young adult and his/her support person must discuss financial assistance with the financial aid office at the university or other educational/training facility.
5. Young adults must apply for any federal or state assistance that may be available. If the young adult is Vocational Rehabilitation eligible, he/she will be able to receive post secondary assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
6. Young adults in custody/post custody status with the Department are eligible for services including financial assistance.

B. Eligibility criteria Young adults must have:

1. Completed an assessment and an Independent Living Plan (form CS-0650). See DCS Policy, [16.58, Independent Living Case Plan](#);
2. Been in foster care as a teenager and must be a citizen or qualified non-resident and may not have personal assets of more than \$10,000;
3. Aged out of the foster care system at age 18, or were adopted from foster care with adoption finalization after the age of 16;
4. Been accepted into or are enrolled in a degree, certificate or other accredited college, university, technical or vocational school and may receive funding until their 23rd birthday as long as they also continue to make satisfactory progress with a letter grade of "C", or a progress report showing adequate level of performance, if an alternate grading system is used (i.e., "P-Pass").

**C. Guidelines to
receive services**

The following guidelines are for young adults who have received permission to continue to receive departmental services to further their post-secondary education:

1. Post secondary assistance is available to assist young adults for paying for part of their tuition, housing, books and supplies. Applications for post secondary funding assistance will be completed by the case manager and U.T. IL specialist and forwarded to the Director of IL in Central Office. Grant awards are based on the financial needs of the student in consideration of other funding sources:

- ◆ Community College: Eligible for **up to *\$5,000 per year** after all other scholarships, awards and grants
- ◆ Tennessee Technology Centers: **Negotiable**
- ◆ Technical Schools: **Negotiable**
- ◆ There could be situations where the cost of the school is less than the Pell grant. In those situations, young adults would receive the refund from the Pell grant but would not receive a grant award from Chafee. Youth must remain Pell grant eligible to receive on-going grant assistance.

* These rates are subject to slight variances based on the number of young adults who are eligible and apply and the amount of Federal Chafee assistance available.

2. The IL staff will work with the post secondary program to establish the final grant award and the billing will be sent to the Director of IL in Central Office.
3. Other associated costs may be eligible for reimbursement through regional IL wraparound funds as follows: (Please see DCS policy [16.54, Purchasing Independent Living Services](#).)
 - ◆ Registration fees for post-secondary education;
 - ◆ Transportation grants may be awarded to young adults who are commuting (not living on campus) to their post secondary education location;

- ♦ Car insurance for youth and young adults 18-23 is available up to age 23 for youth and young adults who must have a vehicle for employment/post secondary education or on-the-job training - up to \$600 per year.
 - ♦ Car repair assistance of owned vehicle is available up to age 18-23 and on an as needed basis as long as the cost does not exceed established limit within the year - up to \$750.
 - ♦ Personal Expense Grant is for young adults not receiving foster care board rates;
 - ♦ College Start-Up Grant up to \$250 is available for one time only.
4. Opportunities for post secondary funding should be discussed with the youth in person at least by their 17th birthday. The IL specialist shall be available and will attend this meeting to share resource materials with the young adult regarding post secondary learning opportunities. Examples of these learning opportunities extend from apprenticeship programs to a four-year university.
5. If a youth/young adult is already receiving room and board payments through a college or university, they become ineligible for a foster board payment.

D. Application process

1. The Application process is as follows:
- a) Application deadline for fall semester is June 15.
 - b) Application deadline for summer school is April 15;
Application deadline for spring semester is November 15.
 - c) For schools that begin in January and other schools that do not start in August of each year, an application will be forwarded to Office of IL at least forty-five (45) days before the school starts.
 - d) In special circumstances, applications may be accepted at a later date at the discretion of the Director of Independent Living. However, a late application could result in less available funding.
 - e) Each young adult shall complete an application form, *CS-0599, Application For Post Secondary Funding* and 3 release forms, *CS-0604, Release of Information For*

Post Secondary Assistance. It will be the responsibility of the case managers to identify young adults who need financial assistance in order to attend a post secondary program.

- f) The IL specialist will assist the case manager and young adult with the completion of the application. The application must be completed in its entirety with all supplemental information included.
- g) The young adult must sign form *CS-0604, Release of Information For Post Secondary Assistance* that will enable the case manager, IL specialist and Director of IL to obtain financial information from the school's financial aid office as well as schedules, attendance records and grades. This will enable the amount of the grant award to be determined and also provide some oversight and support to the young adult as they transition and adjust to their post-secondary educational experience.
- h) Copies of the signed release form shall be distributed as follows:
 - ◆ The original release form shall be filed in the case file;
 - ◆ One copy will go to the regional IL specialist; and
 - ◆ One copy must accompany the completed application.
- i) All signed and approved applications shall be forwarded to the Office of IL by the specified due date. Copies of the application shall be filed in the young adult's case file, a copy sent to the IL specialist and the young adult shall receive a copy of the application for their records.
- j) Any application that does not have completed information regarding financial resources and need will be held until the additional information is obtained. No award letter can be sent until this information is complete.
- k) Young adults, who were adopted at age 16 and older, are eligible for post secondary educational assistance for books, supplies and tuition up to age 23.
- l) The young adult will need to:
 - ◆ Complete form *CS-0599, Application For Post Secondary Funding* and attach a copy of the adoption decree that explains that they were in DCS

- custody to the application.
- ◆ Attach a cover letter to the application that explains that the young adult who has been adopted is seeking financial assistance to pursue post secondary goals.
 - ◆ Send the application and attachments to the IL Program in DCS Central Office.
2. Young adults shall be responsible for school expenses above the grant award.
 3. The young adult must be enrolled in college or post high school educational or vocational programs and attending as a full time student. Waivers for freshmen and sophomores will be granted for young adults who are working and attending school. However, the main focus must be to obtain their post secondary degree. Remedial classes will be reimbursed as long as the student is a degree-seeking student. Costs for summer school will be reimbursed if funding is available. However, in most cases young adults will be required to have a summer job.
 4. The Department will continue support to the young adults by payment for room and board. Room and Board is defined in the Chafee Independent Living Plan as:
 - ◆ Room: *an apartment occupied by the youth, residing with a foster parent, residing in a college dorm or sorority house, and independent living residence, group home or other eligible independent living facilities.*
 - ◆ Board: *meals, utilities, transportation and clothing, necessary to attain self-sufficiency and promote independency.*
 5. Young adults who are first year students and are attending a four-year school will be required to live in campus-sponsored housing. Others will be required to live in campus sponsored housing if available. Housing deposits will be sent to the University's Housing Department in a timely manner.
 6. The young adult and the Department must mutually agree to an IL plan that details the tasks that must be accomplished and life skills that must be obtained in order to receive BRIGHT FUTURE payments. The agreement shall include:
 - ◆ Form CS-0650, *Independent Living Plan*;

- ◆ Form CS-0645, *Independent Living Plan Youth Responsibilities Agreement*;
- ◆ The agreed upon tasks by the young adult and the Department;
- ◆ The terms of payment that the Department will make; and
- ◆ The time limits to achieve specific goals for the contract to continue and eventually be completed.

7. Once the award is made:

- a) A letter that contains the amounts and billing instructions will be faxed to the post-secondary institution, and a copy sent to the student.
- b) Case managers and young adults may call the DCS IL Program Office for a verification of award.
- c) Young adults will be notified in writing of the amount of their award based on their financial need.
- d) The bills (invoices) will be sent directly to the DCS IL Program Office.

8. The IL plan will be reviewed with the young adult every six (6) months and updated, if needed. The young adult shall participate in the six (6) month reviews. The regional IL specialist must be included in the plan development and review process. The IL plan will include at a minimum:

- a) Services to be provided, including the frequency of direct contacts with the case manager.
- b) A statement requiring that the young adult shall submit to his/her case manager a copy of his/her grade report to verify academic progress at the completion of each semester.
- c) The case manager and/or IL program staff shall request the school to notify DCS if the young adult drops out of school. During the application process the young adult will need to sign a release of information to enable Departmental representatives to receive information from the post secondary program.

9. The case manager and/or IL program staff will verify in writing with the school, college, junior college, trade school, etc., the young adult's acceptance and enrollment into their program and the financial aid package that will be available to the young adult at the beginning of each term. The young adult may have already received the verification from the program; therefore, a copy of the verification will need to be attached to the application.
10. The case manager shall ensure:
 - a) Contact is made with the young adult in person at least every two (2) months to verify continuing school attendance and to provide whatever supportive assistance may be necessary.
 - b) On the months when there is not a face-to-face visit, there must be a phone contact with the young adult. The IL specialist will provide additional support to the young adult in the post secondary program and a written report will be sent to the case manager from the IL Specialist, until this information can be recorded into TN Kids. This report will provide a record of the contact with the young adult.
 - c) Telephone and mail contacts may be appropriate to supplement the in-person contacts or for those students attending school out of state. Additionally, support persons will need to be identified to provide support to the young adult.
11. **Please remember:** Our case management contacts are meant to be empowering and supportive in nature much as any parent would support their own young adult in school. In post secondary, if the young adult is engaged in behaviors that will result in poor academic performance, there will be logical consequences in the form of academic probation and/or loss of federal and state financial assistance.

**E. Developing
budgets and
terminating
service
agreements**

1. Budgets will be developed at the beginning of each term for young adult in the BRIGHT FUTURES program.
2. A budget will be developed jointly between the young adult, case manager and IL specialist.

3. IL plans will be terminated upon graduation. Young adults will not be eligible for Chafee funded assistance after their 23rd birthday unless graduating within a semester.

F. Maintaining eligibility

1. Young adults will be discharged from BRIGHT FUTURES if they fail to maintain the eligibility requirements of their college, university, or institution. They will be allowed one school term (probationary term) to rectify their eligibility.
2. Young adults must remain substance free and refrain from the sale, distribution and harboring of drugs, alcohol and/or association with any pornography acts to maintain their eligibility for services.

Forms

CS-0599	Application For Post Secondary Funding
CS-0604	Release of Information For Post Secondary Assistance
CS-0650	Independent Living Plan
CS-0645	Independent Living Plan Youth Responsibilities Agreement

Collateral Documents

None

Standards

None

Glossary

Term	Definition
Chafee Foster Care Independent Living (CFCIP):	A grant to assist States and localities in establishing and carrying out programs designed to assist foster youth likely to remain in foster care until 18 years of age and youth who have left foster care because they attained 18 years of age, have not yet attained 21 years of age, to make the transition from foster care

to independent living.

***Education and
Training Vouchers
(ETV):***

Education and Training Vouchers (*these funds are kept separate from the funding of other Chafee Independent Living Program funds*) were added the Chafee Program to assist youth connected with the foster care system with the high cost of post-high school education. Vouchers can be used for two and four-year universities, vocational training programs and job training programs.

Youth who meet their state's eligibility requirements for Chafee services will qualify for ETVs, with two notable exceptions. First, youth receiving ETVs can continue to qualify for the financial assistance through age 23 as long as they are still in some form of higher educational program at age 21 and are making satisfactory progress.